

The Family

Intro. Twelve was a significant age; it was the age when Jewish children were old enough to start accepting responsibility for their religious life, learning Torah, the Jewish scripture and following the Commandments. That year boys spent in intensive study of the scripture preparing for Bar Mitzvah. It is similar to the age for Confirmation of young women and men in our tradition.

I. After leaving Jerusalem, each parent thought the young Jesus was with the other or somewhere in the caravan. Every parent understands the panic that threatened to overcome Joseph and Mary when they realized he wasn't. They were already one day away from Jerusalem. We read it took them *three frantic days* to find their son. The young Jesus explained

why he thought Joseph and Mary should have known where he was. They didn't understand what he meant, but he listened to their concern for his safety. He respected their authority and returned with them home. We see how they were like most families. Joseph and Mary's first response was relief, "Thank you, God you're safe." The next was anger and confusion, "Son, why have you done this to us? Your father and I have been looking for you with great anxiety." This scene has taken place in many of our homes when children – *or parents* – were not where they were supposed to be. Anxiety gives way to relief and then to anger because we were scared about ones we love.

Even the Holy Family had their misunderstandings and miscommunications. Jesus didn't *intentionally* decide to worry his parents. While they were

attending to the rituals of the pilgrimage to Jerusalem, he was listening to and learning from the rabbis. He did not expound on all his knowledge of tradition and scripture. He listened and asked questions of the temple teachers. He was as focused in the discussions as some people today are playing their favorite video games. *Any of us* can get so engrossed with a book or game or other interest that we lose track of time.

Concl. Being part of a family or group brings with it responsibilities. Respect for and trust in each other; a willingness to abide agreed upon rules or guidelines of acceptable behavior and accountability when the agreements are broken or ignored. Each member of a family has responsibilities for the care of each other and the home. Taking out the garbage or washing dishes or clothes or doing homework or

going to work or grocery shopping are not fun but are important to family life. Our love for each other means recognizing that growth and maturity don't always go smoothly and not always the way we want [M. McGlone, *NCR*]. May we all –adults and children – continue throughout our lives to grow in wisdom and knowledge and love in the presence of the Lord. And may those values influence the world in which we live.

Fr. Michael Pendergraft

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